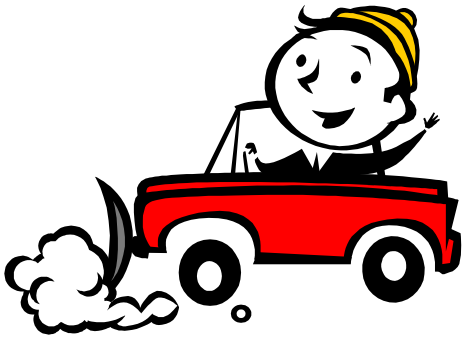

Winter Weather
How To Handle Your Car On Snow and Ice

Not all cars drive alike. Being comfortable with different winter weather capabilities of a vehicle can mean the difference between a safe trip and serious trouble. Front wheel drive vehicles generally handle better than rear-wheel-drive vehicles on slippery roads because the weight of the engine is on the drive wheels, which improves traction. The back end of rear wheel-drive-cars tends to slide from side-to-side during turns on icy roads. While many motorists now drive sport –utility vehicles and light trucks that can be excellent for driving in difficult conditions, drivers are warned not to become over confident.

Pickup truck drivers with rear-wheel-drive should be especially cautious on slick roads. Because these vehicles have very little weight over the wheels that propel the vehicle, they are prone to rear –wheel skids on slippery roads. Adding weight to the bed of the truck will help give it stability.

A vehicle's brake system also determines how motorists should operate their cars in winter weather.

Anti-lock braking systems (ABS) provide significant stopping advantages on slick roads, but are only effective if properly used. Drivers of cars with ABS should remember the slogan, "Don't Let Up!" When stopping a vehicle with ABS in slippery conditions, motorists should apply steady pressure to the brake pedal. The ABS will automatically pump the brakes to keep the wheels from locking and the vehicle from skidding.

If you don't have ABS, gently apply pumping pressure to the brakes during slippery conditions to avoid wheel lock up.

Whereas ABS works during braking, traction control prevents wheel spin during acceleration. Traction control, featured in many new cars, allows motorists to maintain control while accelerating on slippery surfaces by reducing power to the drive wheels. This allows the car to get a better grip on slippery surfaces.

Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division
This winter safe information was obtained from Ice Pack, a group of pubic and private agencies in Illinois and Indiana.